

## NIGERIAN POLICE FORCE (NPF) AND CHALLENGES OF CRIME CONTROL

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**ABSTRACT:** *Addressing the escalating insecurity and crime rates in Nigeria stands as a paramount and pressing objective for both current and forthcoming administrations. This imperative task holds profound existential implications for citizens and the broader society alike. Without sufficient security measures in place, individuals are unable to fully realize their potential. This research delves into the Nigerian Police Force's struggle with crime control within the nation. Grounded in Anomie and Conflict theories, the research underscores the intricate relationship between crime and the psychological dynamics of cultural norms and societal structures. Individual perceptions and interpretations of events significantly shape their cognition and subsequent behavior. Cognitive thematic analytic design was used for data collections. The study identifies corruption, political interference, inadequate training, low literacy levels, and the centralization of policing as key challenges confronting the Nigerian police force in their crime control efforts. Recommendations include prioritizing existence of State Police, training and education initiatives for the Nigerian police force to enhance their community policing and effective crime control in the society.*

**KEYWORDS:** Nigerian Police Force (NPF), Crime Control, Challenges

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### INTRODUCTION

The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) shoulders the crucial responsibility of maintaining law and order in a nation plagued by diverse criminal activities Section 4 of the Nigerian Police Act 2020. However, the efficacy of the NPF in fulfilling its mandate has come under scrutiny due to the myriad challenges it faces. This research study endeavors to delve into the complex obstacles confronting the Nigeria Police Force in effectively combating crime and maintaining public safety.

Crime has affected all facet of social life to the extent that there is hardly a day that passes without reports of crime occurrences across the country (Bayley & Shearing, 2021). As observed by Dambazau (2017), the country has been on the world crime map since 1980s, and the types of crimes that are very common in country ranges from homicide, armed robbery, rape, housebreak, car theft, fraud, drug abuse, bribery and corruption, gambling, kidnapping, smuggling, human trafficking, drug trafficking, cybercrime, money laundering, advanced fee fraud (419) and more recently oil bunkering, and genocide

activities by criminal herdsmen and Boko Haram terrorists.

To tackle this menace, the Criminal Justice System (CJS) is empowered by the Nigerian government to check the scourge. Out of the three agencies of the CJS; police, courts, and the prisons, the police are at the forefront to control crime (Ofolokunbi, 2016). According to Section 214 (1) of the Nigerian constitution, the government of Nigeria only recognizes a single police force (Nigeria Police Force (NPF), and empowers it with the statutory responsibility of detection and prevention of crime, apprehending and prosecution of criminals, protection of lives and property of citizens, enforcement and maintenance of laws and order (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999).

### Objectives of the Research

1. To understand more about the concept of policing and crime control.
2. To factor out various challenges facing the Nigerian police in crime control.
3. To proffer solutions to the challenges facing the Nigerian police in crime control.

### **Significance of the Research**

Study relating to the police is deemed very important, because of the essential nature of the services rendered by this occupational group. In as much as studies have focused on the dilapidated state of police and their commitment to work, this study focuses on crime control and its challenges. To a great extent, this study highlights the dynamics of crime, various challenges facing the police as it regards to crime control and ways by which this identified challenges can be solved.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The general level of insecurity resulting from the incessant cases of insurgent atrocities, armed robbery, murder, assassinations and poor response rate to distress calls from the victims of violent crime, creates a negative public image for the Nigerian Police Force (Adebayo, 2014). There is a great need to identify the various factors responsible for the inability of the Nigerian Police to limit the rate at which crime is been committed in the country. Hence, the researcher looks at the Nigerian Police Force, the dynamic nature of crime, and the challenges of crime control in the country.

### **Psychohistory of Nigeria Police**

From pre-colonial experience, traditional African policing methods were rooted in the community and closely interlinked with social and religious structures. However, as the British sought colonial expansion across the territories known today as Nigeria, they established local, decentralized police forces. The first such force was created to police the Lagos colony in 1861. Subsequent constabularies were formed in what became the northern and southern protectorate. The composition of these police forces varied depending on location.

In 1930, the Northern and Southern police forces integrated into the first national police force; called the Nigeria Police Force. This was headed by an Inspector General of Police (IGP). The following years saw further changes in the organizational development of the force, such as the introduction of regional policing to reflect the federalism of Nigeria. Responsibility for maintaining law and order was now shared by federal and regional governments. On attaining independence, the country embraced Nigerian

Police Force as her security organization. Today, Nigeria is currently having a centralized police force, as entrenched in the 1999 constitution of Section 214 (1) of the 1999 constitution

### **Conceptual Review**

#### **The Nigeria Police Force**

The Nigeria Police is the principal law enforcement and the lead security agency in Nigeria with staff strength of about 371,800 (Micah & John, 2017). There are currently plans to increase the force to 650,000, adding 280,000 new recruits to the existing 370,000. The NPF is a very large organization consisting of 36 State commands grouped into 12 zones and 7 administrative organs. The agency is currently headed by IGP Adamu Muhammed. In 2020, it underwent major overhauls. The Nigerian Police (NP) is designated by the 1999 constitution as the national police of Nigeria with exclusive jurisdiction throughout the country (Odeyemi, Temitayo & Obiyan, 2017; Odeyemi, Temitayo & Obiyan, 2018)

During the Regime of former head of state Olusegun Obasanjo, an attempt was made to expand the NPF by reducing the recruitment age from nineteen to seventeen and by enrolling demobilized soldiers, but it failed. In mid-1980 the then federal police minister acknowledged that the police had recovered only 14 percent of the US\$900 million worth of property reported stolen in the preceding six months, and that only 20 percent of the 103,000 persons arrested had been found guilty, a performance record about the same as that reported in the 1960s. The use of excessive violence in quelling student disorders led the AFRC in June 1986 to direct the police to use only rubber bullets in containing student riots (Odeyemi, Temitayo & Obiyan, 2018). In September 2005, Nigeria withdrew 120 police officers serving in the UN Congo mission because of accusations that they had engaged in sexual abuses (Micah & John, 2017).

The NPF is alleged to follow a policy of "Fire for Fire" in which many captured suspects die in police custody or are shot while attempting to escape (Micah & John, 2017).

#### **Policing and Crime Control**

Police is an agency of government that is responsible for maintaining public order and preventing crime. Policemen are the government

officials most proximate to crime-temporally and procedurally and are the leading figures in crime-prevention/control and in the lawenforcement process (Odekunle, 2020). In general, the responsibility of crime control agencies is to detect crimes, apprehend the perpetrators, and provide evidence that will convince judges and juries that the perpetrators are guilty beyond a reasonable doubt (Nicol, 2018). Police also refers to a socio-political and quasi-legal institution charged with the responsibility of crime control, enforcing criminal law and the maintenance of law and order (Alemika, 2013). The police in Nigeria are State officials charged with responsibility for 'crime control, law enforcement and order maintenance' in society. That is, enforce the laws, values and ideologies that justify, legitimize and defend prevailing distribution of power and wealth in society (Aremu, 2019).

However, police repression became increasingly intensified under the successive military regimes after 1966 (Alemika 2013). As been observed, police repression has persisted, and in most cases intensified. For instance: The Nigeria Police Force is still largely vicious and corrupt. Crime has been defined in various ways by different scholars such as Onoge (2003); Clinard (2004); Adler, Mueller, and Laufer (2011); Adeyemi (2011); etc. For instance, Onoge (2003) defined crime as an act or omission which renders the person doing the act or making the omission liable to punishment under any order in council, ordinance, law or statute. Clinard (2004) sees crime as those activities that break the law of the land and are subject to official punishment.

To Adler, Mueller, and Lauifer (2011) crime is any human conduct that violates criminal laws and is subject to punishment. While Adeyemi (2011) defined crime as acts that violate laws (formal, official, written statements of norms). According to them, no matter how reprehensible an act or the omission of an act may be, a crime has not been committed unless a specific law has been violated. Moreover, the violation must be either intentional or negligent. However, in spite of the differences in the definitions given by those authors the fact remains that a crime (i) is an act or omission (ii) proscribed by the state; and (iii) has a punishment

for its occurrence. Australian Institute of Criminology AIC (AIC, 2012) defined crime control as the variety of approaches that are applied by individuals, societies, industries, non-government institutions and all tiers of government to target the numerous social and ecological influences that upsurge the danger of crime, disorder and persecution (Adebayo, 2013).

According to NPF (2009) decreasing rate of crime also stresses a process of analysis to control the source of specific types of criminal activities as well as the harmonization of resources and abilities of a variety of role players to implement and develop suitable interferences (Ladan, 2008). Criminologists have outlined three perceptions of crime prevention which are primary, secondary and tertiary preventions (Adebayo, 2013).

1. Primary Prevention: Under this approach, societies try to alter ecological circumstances that provide chances for the incidence of criminal actions.
2. Secondary Prevention: At this stage, efforts are intensified to change people, particularly those at high risk of getting on criminal occupation before they do so. The agents of this secondary crime prevention include; the mass media, various agencies and organizations like Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and public enlightenment.
3. Tertiary Prevention: At this phase, the actual offender is the main focus. The aim is to prevent future occurrence of the criminal acts. It also aimed at total eradication of the criminal acts. Prisons and probation homes are the agents involved in this stage.

### **Crime Dynamics and Challenges of Policing in Nigeria**

The 21st century has brought new challenges to the police. To maintain, or regain, their leadership of this new agenda, police agencies need first to recognize and understand the changing environment and its challenges (Weisburd & Braga, 2007). Crimes may not necessarily affect all countries at the same rate or with equal severity (UN Congress on Crime Prevention & Justice, 2015). In this changing cultural and social climate, contemporary

policing is marked by the diversification and uncertainty of crime control problems. Until recently, public police dominated the delivery of modern crime control. But trends in governance and the regulation of society have led to the pluralization and privatization of policing efforts, and the growth in administrative and regulatory agencies with crime control and prevention functions (Weisburd & Braga, 2007).

Additionally, a trend of responsibility has meant that communities and individuals are expected to contribute to their own regulation, security and safety (Bayley & Shearing, 2011). Contemporary policing services are increasingly provided by networks of public, private and welfare organizations, with public police as one node of the network. Despite the early promise of community, problem-oriented and other innovative models of policing (Weisburd & Braga, 2006), police are increasingly displaced or subjugated by these other agents and nodes of crime control.

A growing literature describes how functions once largely monopolized by public police are now shared among different security providers, such as state and private security services; military, regulatory and welfare agencies; transnational organizations; and private interests (Bayley & Shearing, 2011; Mazerolle & Ransley 2015, 2016). This trend has led to the need for a redefinition of the policing function, as well as a redefinition of the role that the public police occupy within these new structures (Bayley, 2016; Bayley & Shearing, 2011).

While the Nigeria Police Force has always had to deal with unauthorized arrivals (Lynch, 2019), the problem has recently developed new dimensions. Additionally, the experience of epidemics such as Acquire Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and bird flu has led to fears of epidemic affected populations arriving. On occasions, those overlapping roles have been poorly coordinated and deficient (Palmer, 2005). In practice, policing in Africa is much less clearly defined than in western countries, and its definition probably needs to be broadened beyond the activities of formal groups. In Nigeria, for instance, policing must be understood in relation to the activities of the Nigeria Police Force, the military (some of whom

may be deployed as special police units), some eight or more paramilitary units, various palace guards, numerous quasi-official units in various states, and miscellaneous thugs associated with strongmen.

Groups such as the Bakassi Boys, Oodua People's Congress (OPC) who drives around in police vehicles and are financed by some state governors; provide vigilante-style policing (Ismail, 2012). The police in collaboration with the relevant state security agencies also provide surveillance network on the activities of persons considered security risks in order to prevent sabotage and subversion of the nation and its established institutions. Nevertheless, internal security over the years have been described as pathetic as notable as well as unknown individuals have lost their lives, and till date, a lot of these deaths have not been resolved based on the slow pace of investigation processes by the Nigeria Police Force. These include; the murder cases of Chief Bola Ige, former Minister of Justice in December, 2001 at Ibadan; Barrister and Mrs. Igwe in September 2002 at Onitsha; Alhaji Isiaku Muhammed in September, 2002 in Kano, Sir Theodore Agwatu in February 2003 in Owerri; Chief Ogbonna Uche also in February 2003 and Dr. Harry Mashall in March, 2003 (Ismail, 2012).

Accounting for these is the dismal image of the police overtime which has also led to the non-cooperation by the public who are often reluctant to volunteer useful information to the police (Odekunle, 2004). Yet, no one is more sensitive to the great and urgent need for more efficient and effective law enforcement than the top brass of the force.

### **Police Capacity in Crime Control**

Most Nigerians describe police as a motley crowd of lazy, inefficient, corrupt uniformed men and women contributing to the perpetrating of crimes such as mass killing, intimidation, rape, extrajudicial killings/summary execution and other heinous crimes against citizens they are paid to protect (Uhunmwuangho & Aluforo, 2011).

The challenge is that an ineffective police force cannot command the respect of the public (Adeyemi, 2011). The Nigeria Police Force (2018) in their annual report noted that the police

is incapacitated and handicapped to police the society due to combination of factors that plagued them, among which are; lack of resources, poor government support, poor condition of service, lack of appropriate and adequate training and ill-equipped workforce. Coupled with these are the issue of police extortion and corruption and other vices common among the police system which contributes to their lack of efficiency (Alemika, 2009). One of the glaring problems that contribute immensely to the NPF incapacity in crime control is the issue of lack of manpower. The force is the principal law enforcement agency in Nigeria with staff strength of about 371,800 consisting of 36 commands grouped in 12 zones and 7 administrative organs (Wikipedia on NPF, 2015). This manpower strength is definitely too minimal to cope with the policing of the population of Nigeria which is estimated to about 150 million. The police also lack adequate training of their staff (Idowu & Imo, 2014).

According to Ibidapo-Obe (2003), training is an invaluable tool for the effective policing of any society. The Nigerian police are untrained or ill-trained, they lack the requisite knowledge, skill and attitude for effective crime control and is also a threat to the society (Idowu & Imo, 2011). Again, the Nigerian Police Force in the modern age seems to be handicapped in the face of current realities. It has been noticed that despite the teeming police personnel, the force is still bereft of manpower in certain quotas. There have been situations in which the police complain of shortage of staff when issues are reported to them (Idowu & Imo, 2014).

Abdulkadir (2014) asserted that the Nigeria Police Force lack adequate communication gadgets, vehicles, computers, crime detecting appliances, forensic experts and laboratories. For him, it is even a thing of shame, that some of the police officers do not even know what CCTV mean and stands for.

The police used primitive equipment in crime prevention and control, lack of facilitated forensic laboratory and data bank, lack of adequate intelligence, educated, trained, skilled and qualified personnel and lack of experts in the specialized fields (Idowu & Imo, 2014). Similarly, Odita (2010) argued that the Nigerian Police Force is not properly equipped for its task

of crime control (NOPRIN & NHRC, 2010; Onovo, 2011)

### **Theoretical Review**

#### **Anomie Theory (Merton, 1930):**

According to the Anomie Theory developed by Robert Merton, in the late 1930s, crime is not simply a function of deprivation but the result of a disjuncture (lack of connection) between ends (goals) and the means to attain those ends. Merton argues that, deviance results not from pathological personalities but from the culture and structure of society itself. He begins from the standard functionalist position of value consensus, that is, all members of societies share the same values. However, since members of society are placed in different position in the social structure, for example, they differ in terms of class position; they do not have the same opportunity of realizing the shared values. This situation can generate deviance (Lynch, 2009).

In Merton's word, 'the social and cultural structures generate pressure for socially deviant behaviors upon people variously located in that structure' (Haralambos & Heald, 2011). People who aspire through the cultural norm for economic achievement but are denied the education, capital, or other means to realize those ends will experience strain (anomie). According to Merton, there are three possible responses to this strain. First, the person may try what Merton calls innovation. Although the individual continues to accept the cultural value of success, he or she will employ illegitimate means, such as theft or robbery, to obtain money because legitimate means to achieve this end are not available (Haralambos & Heald, 2011). Another possible response is what Merton termed retreatism. The person gives up the pursuit of economic success and engages in self-destructive behavior, such as drug abuse. Finally, Merton identified the response of rebellion, wherein the person abandons the culturally dictated goal of economic achievement and engages in revolutionary activities or in attempts to reform the system (Lynch, 2009).

In Nigeria, just like in other modern societies, education is an important avenue for social mobility. Individuals who have a good education tend to have good jobs and are likely to attain occupational success. It is therefore

difficult for people who have no access to good quality education, do not have social connection, and cannot attain a high level of education and occupational status to rise in society. There is a great temptation for individuals who cannot succeed through acceptable channels of mobility to employ socially prescribed means to attain their ends (Onwuenme, 2012). From the forgoing, therefore, it is clear that the Anomie Theory provides explanation to crime and security problems in Nigeria. Presently, in Nigeria, even those that are privileged to attain a high level of education are found committing crime, due to the high level of unemployment and unbearable state of poverty in the country. Consequently, many people are left with no other option than to resort to what Merton called innovation, thereby, become criminals. Similarly, the activities of the militant groups in Niger delta, Boko Haram in north eastern part of the country other related groups can be regarded as what Merton termed as rebellion. In connection to the above, Metiboba (2010) stated that: a school of thought has proffered that until something realistic is done about poverty, ignorance and diseases that stare on the faces of average person in most of families in developing countries, there can be no crime control measure that will succeed in this place.

This explains the challenges the police is confronted with in controlling recurring crimes in Nigeria. Property crime such as theft, arson, burglary, etc is rapidly increasing and becoming one of the major problems of developmental progress in Nigeria (Tanimu, 2003 in Metiboba, 2010). Commenting on the issue of Boko-Haram, Magaji (2009) stated that; we are living in the same country but these youth see the children of politicians, governors, ministers and the rest of them driving expensive vehicles and the majority of the children of the poor are not getting three-square meals.

**Conflict Theory:** Those who follow the teachings of Karl Marx (1818 – 1883: known as Marxists), who was the pioneer of the conflict theory believed that there exists a basic conflict, between those who own and control the means of production and those who do not. Those who control economic relationship constitute a ruling class that control social relationship. However,

when members of ruling class violate such laws, sanctions are not rigorously enforced (Quinney 2014).

The Conflict theory opined that: Law is a tool by which the ruling class exercises its control. Law both protects the property of those in power and serves to repress political threats to the position of the elite. Law is the state's coercive weapon, which maintains the social and economic order, and supports some interest at the expense of others, even when those interests are that of the majority (Vago, 2010). This theory asserts that criminal law is fashioned according to the needs of these elites, and to the detriment of classes with lower status (Lynch, 2009).

## **METHOD**

The research employed an analytical design. Sources of information for this research were through primary and secondary data. In this, information from the police diaries, bulletins, newspaper, magazines and broadcasting media were acquired concerning the Nigerian Police and crime control; this serves as the secondary source of information. Discussions were also made with high ranking and experienced Police Officers and as well as individuals; this serves as the primary source of information. This people are very strategic in police decision making as it concerns crime control in Nigeria.

This information acquired from this primary and secondary data were given cognitive thematic analysis. Cognitive thematic analysis is a method for analyzing qualitative data that involves reading through a set of data and looking for patterns in the meaning of the data to find themes that relates to the subject matter (Liu, 2023). In the cognitive thematic analysis, points that are related were summarized together. From all these summarized points, challenges in crime control confronting the Nigerian Police Force were distilled out.

## **Nigeria Police Force and Challenges of Crime Control**

The challenges confronting Nigerian Police in crime control are too numerous. However, very significant few have been identified and discussed below. They include:

1. Corruption
2. Political Influence
3. Inadequate Personnel Training

4. Illiteracy
5. Centralization of Nigeria Police
6. Systematic Challenges
  - a) Leadership challenges
  - b) Institutional challenges
  - c) Structural challenges
  - d) Legal challenges
7. Operational/Environmental Challenges
8. Financial Challenges

## DISCUSSION

**Corruption:** Corruption is one of the most widely pervasive problems of Africa. In developing countries, corruption is really regarded as a crime, even though it is specified crime (Marshall & Daniel, 2013). Corruption is preserved in Nigeria, it is found being practiced by the rich and the poor, the height and the lowly. Corruption in Nigeria is attributed to the growing spin of materialism and the craze for wealth (Onwuenme, 2012). In support of this, Vision (2010) stated that “the ordinary Nigerian appears helpless in the face of weak and selective application of sanctions against the perpetrators since the law enforcement agencies have themselves become infected with corruption”. Nigeria’s legacy of mismanagement and corrupt governance has encouraged many people to find a way of sharing the national cake instead of helping to bake it.

**Political Interference:** There is too much political interference in policing in Nigeria. This demotivates good officers as political patronage becomes a basis for promotion and benefits. This interference has also reduced the number of Specialist Duty Officers in the NPF.

**Inadequate Personnel Training:** Concerning the inadequate police personal, it has been observed in a workshop organized at Ilorin, Kwara State, in April 1997 that the Nigeria Police Force is presently under staffed, especially at the lower cadre (rank and file). The workshop therefore recommended that the embargo on recruitment of personnel be lifted (Communiqué, 1994-97).

**Illiteracy:** The Nigeria Police Force experienced endemic problems with recruiting, training inefficiency and indiscipline, and it lacked expertise in specialized field (UN, 2008). In this regard, Onwuenme (2012) stated that, “education and monetary rewards enhance one’s

social prestige. Since many in the police force have neither good education nor income, their prestige suffers”. During a workshop on ‘police and social justice’ organized in September 1996, at Owerri, Imo State. It was observed that there is lack of standardized career development of the police personnel.

**Decentralization of Nigeria Police:** The need to decentralize the Nigerian police and establish state police is paramount for several reasons. Firstly, Nigeria’s vast and diverse geographical and cultural landscape requires localized law enforcement to effectively address region-specific challenges. Furthermore, establishing State Police can alleviate the burden on the federal police force, enabling more focused attention on national security concerns.

**Systematic Challenges:** The Police Service Commission (PSC), the civilian oversight body of the police, has no independent capacity to investigate or ‘police’ the police force. Complaints against Nigerian police officers made to the PSC end up being investigated by the police itself, who then report to the PSC.

**Operational and Environmental Challenges:** Lack of adequate equipment and tools is a major challenge for the police. Up to 40 per cent of officers are on personal guard duties to protect so-called very important persons (VIPs) who are public and private sector personalities. Regardless of the insufficient police personnel in the country, anyone that can afford to pay for their services gets an officer. This creates operational difficulties for the core policing functions given the scarcity of available officers.

**Financial Challenges:** In my view, not enough is being spent on policing in Nigeria. Nigerian police often receive support from donations and corporate goodwill. Basic infrastructure and equipment do not exist in many police locations. For instance, fingerprint searching and matching is done manually on paper cards using hand-held magnifying glass. The paper is kept in old filing cabinets. Even in Lagos, there is no computerized fingerprint database. Most officers buy their own uniforms and allowances are paid very late, if at all.

## Implications of the Findings

The research highlights how societal structures and cultural factors contribute to deviant behavior. Understanding these influences is crucial for developing effective crime control strategies that address root causes rather than merely symptoms. The study points out the need for a drastic reformation of the Nigerian Police to improve its public image. A positive perception of law enforcement agencies is essential for gaining citizens' trust and cooperation in crime control efforts.

### Recommendations

1. The Nigerian Police should, as a matter of urgency, display a very good positive perception towards the public. Insight of this, police officers should exhibit professionalism in the discharge of their duties.
2. The Nigerian Police personnel should acquaint themselves with the new provisions of the Police Act 2020. The Act provides for the (a) enhancement of professionalism in the police force through the provision of increased training opportunities for police officers and other persons employed by the police force; and (b) creates an enduring cooperation and partnership between the police force and communities in maintaining peace and combating crimes nationwide.
3. Furthermore, there is equally the need to provide the Nigeria police with modern/sophisticated vehicles and weapons.

### Conclusion

Issues and challenges of policing in contemporary Nigeria are numerous to be treated in this paper. However, some salient ones are analyzed. Basically, policing is essential part of human existence. Therefore, the primary responsibility of police officers and organizations is the protection of citizens by upholding the law and respecting the legally expressed will of the whole community and not a particular party or clique. On the other hand, contemporary policing requires more advanced technological equipment.

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